UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/2067
25 January 1996

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General recommends extension of UNIFIL mandate until 31 July; says Force contributes to stability in Lebanon.

* Secretary-General calls for early conclusion of comprehensive test ban treaty as Disarmament Conference begins 1996 session in Geneva.

* European Union proposes package to address United Nations financial crisis; says all Member States must make firm and clear commitment to acquit arrears and pay future contributions promptly and in full.

* Humanitarian crisis mounts in Kabul, Afghanistan, as city is cut off from aid deliveries.

* UNICEF joins international organizations in commemorating 200 years of vaccines.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) be extended for another six months, until 31 July 1996. In a report to the Security Council, dated 22 January, the Secretary-General said that although there had been no progress towards the implementation of UNIFIL's mandate, its contribution to stability in the area and the protection it gave to local inhabitants remained important. UNIFIL was established under Security Council resolution 425 (1978) to ensure the withdrawal of Israeli forces and assist the Lebanese Government in re-establishing its authority in the south of the country. There are 5,146 United Nations peace-keepers stationed in Lebanon.

The situation in Lebanon was essentially unchanged and remained tense and volatile, the Secretary-General said. Israel still occupied parts of the south, where their forces were attacked by resistence groups. During the last six months there had been a decrease in the targeting of civilians and attendant loss of life, and he urged the parties to continue to exercise restraint and end the practice altogether.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

* * *

Contributions to the United Nations regular budget by Member of the European Union would increase after the time of its proposal to address the Organization's financial crisis. The proposals were part of a comprehensive package outlined today by the permanent Representative of Italy, Francesco Paolo Fulci, on behalf of the European Union. The Czech Republic, Poland and Romania, as well as Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, aligned themselves with the statement. He said that no reform would be possible for [illegible] unless all Member States, including those with above world average burden [illegible] would pay more, and above majority would pay less.

The proposals were presented in the Fifth Committee [illegible] to the Financial situation of the United Nations which [illegible] must change its working methods, stop talking and start acting. It must get down to negotiations, because the [illegible] is legitimate to ask. Any solution must be based on a package. As a result of the action it undertakes [illegible] would certainly not solve the present financial problems. The present crisis, notably the gap between ability to pay and arrear contributions, was open to criticism and current misstatements should be eliminated or refuted. He said firm and clear commitment from all Member States to adopt, [illegible] pay future contributions promptly and in full, was an indispensable counterpart to the proposals.

The proposals reaffirmed the traditional methodology of assessment according to "capacity to pay", with special relief for low per capita income countries, and a "premium" for permanent Security Council members to reflect their special responsibility for international peace and security. The result they pursued on the idea of an objective and universally accepted method on a long-term basis for determining full contributions to the regular and peace-keeping budgets. This would lead to a more equitable and transparent scale which would adjust automatically to relevant economic situations and take into account the needs of countries with a low per capita income.

Ambassador Fulci said a system of early payment incentives and penalties would be included. Introduction of [illegible] country accumulates more than two years of arrears, [illegible] above years, application of interest, at the earliest [illegible] lottery of [illegible] with suspension [illegible] and liquidation [illegible] recalculation of their ratings. [illegible] Secretariat should also [illegible] their financial obligations.

* * *

The proliferation of [illegible] and the [illegible] availability of their [illegible] was a major [illegible]

more

security, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a statement to the opening of the Conference on Disarmament, in Geneva this week, he called for a coordinated approach by the international community to the growing threat and urged the 38-member Conference to focus renewed energies on concluding a comprehensive test ban treaty this year.

Several speakers also stressed the urgency of concluding a treaty by June and appealed for the reestablishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban. The adoption of a test ban treaty could contribute to global disarmament, help prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and eventually lead to a total ban on all forms nuclear weapons, they said. However, there was much work to do, if a treaty text was to be ready for signature by the General Assembly in September.

* * *

The Humanitarian Affairs coordinator in Afghanistan, Martin Barber has sent disturbing reports on conditions there, a United Nations spokesman said today. The capital has been cut off since 10 January and the World Food Programme (WFP) has not been able to get food shipments into the city. About 60 per cent of Kabaul's 1.2 million people were considered really vulnerable and could not survive without humanitarian aid. The city's population had grown enourmously in last few weeks as displaced persons sought shelter.

* * *

One of the most important breakthroughs in medical history -- the invention of the smallpox vaccine 200 years ago -- was celebrated today at United Nations Headquarters. The bicentenniel commemoration was launched by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization , the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), sponsors of the Task Force for Child Survival and Development.

According to UNICEF, by the end of 1990, immunization of the world's children had risen from 20 per cent to 80 per cent in just six years. Eight out of every ten children were now protected from deadly diseases -- measles, tuberculosis, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough and polio -- saving 3 million lives each year.

"Wherever children live, vaccines protect them from death, disease and disability", UNICEF Director, Carol Bellamy said. "Today, a child growing up in Malawi can enjoy the same level of protection through immunization as a child living in Switzerland."

* *** *